

**Nebraska State  
Records Board  
State Capitol, Suite 2300  
Lincoln, NE 68509**

**John A. Gale  
Chairman  
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## **APPLICATION FOR STATE RECORDS BOARD GRANT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Agencies desiring grants from the Nebraska State Records Board for projects to improve access to state government information should complete this application and follow any procedures outlined in this application and any accompanying materials.

### **Online Rules & Regulations Posting/Search/Tracking**

1. Name of agency applying for grant

*Secretary of State*

2. Title or brief description of the project

*Online Rules & Regulations Posting/Search/Tracking*

3. Grant request amount

*\$25,000*

4. Will there be a fee for accessing records associated with this project?

*No*

5. If yes, provide any statutory reference or authorization for the fee

*N/A*

6. Please describe the project in detail

*When public policy is enacted into law, there is often a requirement or authorization for the implementing administrative agency to promulgate rules and regulations. These rules & regs most commonly provide additional details necessary for effectively implementing the policy. The rule-making process typically involves publication of a draft for comment by interested or affected citizens or businesses. The rules must then be approved by the Attorney General and Governor before taking effect.*

*Final rules and regulations are filed with the Secretary of State on paper. While some agencies post their rules & regulations on the agency web site, there is no single site through which all rules & regulations are available and searchable. The purpose of this grant request is to provide online access and search capability for this substantial collection of public information.*

*The project will involve several steps:*

- *Converting rules & regs that currently exist only on paper into a searchable web format. These are in many cases documents that were created prior to the availability of personal computers and word processing applications. Presently, there are 2,170 pages of regulations that exist in paper-only format. Converting rules & regs that exist in their original electronic format (most likely a word-processing format) into a searchable web format;*
- *Working with agencies that currently post their rules & regs online to ensure they can be searched and retrieved through the project search engine. Several agencies have posted rules & regulations on the web in PDF format, and there are more than 200 pages of these regulations for which the Secretary of State does not have associated electronic text file. These will need to be converted to an html format to enable online searching;*
- *Developing procedures and capability for ongoing conversion and posting of rules & regs as they take effect in the future;*
- *Enhancement of the Secretary of State's website to incorporate the new service, including search capability;*

*The project will be undertaken in a manner that will provide a foundation for future enhancements, which could include the ability to post, review & comment on draft rules & regs and track their progress through the approval process. Depending on the resource requirements for the first phase of this project, it may be possible to initiate these enhancements within this grant request.*

7. Please describe whom the beneficiary or recipient of this service will be and projected activity for access or use of the proposed service

*Beneficiaries include businesses and citizens interested in reviewing rules & regs that may apply to them. The project may also prove beneficial for legal or policy research purposes. Among other expressions of interest in this capability, several participants in recent focus groups held in conjunction with the Governor's business portal project expressed a strong interest in having this service available.*

8. Estimated timeline for completion

*The grant request will support work by Nebrask@ Online on the system and conversion through October, 2002. System work will be complete by that time, although a more thorough analysis of conversion requirements must be undertaken to assess what progress can be expected on that portion of the project during this time frame.*

9. Agency contribution to the project (labor, equipment, etc.)

*The Secretary of State's office will provide staff assistance in identifying rules & regs requiring conversion, working with agencies and Nebrask@ Online during the conversion process, and assisting with testing the system for accuracy and completeness. Labor to complete the conversion and develop the system will be carried out by Nebrask@ Online using grant funds. Should resources be available within this grant, NOL and the Secretary of State will work with appropriate agencies (including the Governor's Office and Attorney General) to evaluate and possibly initiate enhancements in the area of tracking progress and commenting on draft rules & regulations.*

10. A. Has this project every been submitted as a budget request (explain)?

*No.*

10. B. Does the project require additional statutory authority (explain)?

*No, the Secretary of State of state currently has statutory authority to act as custodian of agency rules & regulations.*

10. C. Why is the grant money needed for the project, and if applicable, how will the service be sustained once the grant money is expended?

*The project falls well within the mission of the State Records Board to improve access to public information. The investment of grant funds will establish a system of online access to a widely-desired collection of public information. Once the system is in place and existing rules & regs are converted, ongoing maintenance will become a routine part of the rule-making process and responsibilities of Nebrask@ Online.*

11. Please describe how this project will enhance the delivery of state agency services or access to those services.

*Agency rules & regulations affect, in one way or another, virtually every citizen and business in Nebraska. While all rules & regs are public information, the ability to obtain and review the information is cumbersome in many instances. Access to this important library of public information will be substantially enhanced by providing the information online, and more importantly, the ability to search the information easily and conveniently.*

12. Please describe how this project will 1) improve the efficiency of agency operations; 2) facilitate collaboration among state agencies; 3) facilitate collaboration between

state agencies and other public institutions; 4) support public/private partnerships in the delivery of public services (you may respond to any or all of these criteria in your answer)

*Availability of rules & regs online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week should cut down on telephone or mail requests for copies, improving agency operational efficiency. The system's search capability will allow retrieval of rules & regs from different agencies that deal with the same subject, creating opportunities for collaboration and eliminate of overlap or conflict among various rules & regs. The project enhances the state's ongoing public/private partnership with Nebraska@ Online.*

13. Contact person information

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Signed This 1st day of April, 2002

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Greg Lemon  
Chief Deputy Secretary of State

## **Addendum to NSRB Grant for Online Rules & Regulations Search**

### Deliverables

- Conversion of rules & regulations available only on paper or scanned PDF files to html format.
- Search engine capable of online searches of agency rules & regulations, including an easily-accessible search screen.
- If desired, design and possible implementation of a tracking system for draft rules & regulations

### Grant Request

- Payment of up to \$10,000 to a subcontractor designated by the Secretary of State to support conversion of paper/scanned PDF documents to html format.
- Payment to Nebrask@ Online of \$5,000 for delivery of the search engine and entry screen.
- \$10,000 reserved to apply to the tracking system for draft rules & regulations should a decision be made to pursue that initiative.

### Time Frame

- Conversion of paper/scanned PDF documents to html format is expected to be completed by November 1, 2002.
- The search engine and entry screen will be completed and ready to launch upon completion of the conversion process.
- Work on the tracking system for draft rules & regs is pending a decision to proceed.

### Technical Considerations

- Conversion of paper/scanned PDF documents into the standard HTML format will require manual data entry and conversion.
- Search capability will be developed as a custom tool for this application built in one of several standard programming languages such as Perl or C.
- Technical aspects of the tracking system, should it be pursued, will be developed in one or more standard languages such as HTML, Perl or C.